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## EPA investigating explosives site

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### DuPont Barksdale Explosives Plant Site Barksdale, Wis.

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#### More information

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Washburn Public Library  
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307 Washington Ave.  
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U.S. Environmental Protection Agency is investigating the DuPont Barksdale Explosives Site in Barksdale, Wis., to find out if it should be on the National Priorities List. The NPL is a list of the nation's worst hazardous waste sites, commonly called Superfund sites, that need further inspection or cleanup.

Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources recently took samples of ground water (underground fresh water), private well water, surface water and sediment from the area. EPA will evaluate tests done on these samples. The results should help determine whether the site should be put on the NPL. Being on the list makes the site eligible for federal cleanup funds under the Superfund law. If DuPont Barksdale is not put on the NPL, the state would continue cleaning up the site. It's also possible that more analysis will be needed to make the decision. In any case, DuPont will most likely be asked to cover some or all of the cleanup costs. WDNR or EPA will oversee the work.

EPA's primary tool in making this decision is called the Hazard Ranking System. Using information gained from inspection of the site, the system can determine whether the site poses a threat to people or the environment.

The main concern is the quality of drinking water for area residents. Most rural residents get their water from private wells. The city of Washburn's water system serves about 2,100 people, while the city of Ashland's system serves about 8,660. There is also concern about the site's effect, if any, on Chequamegon Bay and Lake Superior. Many people fish in these waters, and Ashland's water supply comes from Chequamegon Bay.

#### Background

E.I. DuPont de Nemours & Co. ran the DuPont Barksdale Explosives Plant from 1905 to 1971. The company produced TNT, dynamite and other explosives for the military during World Wars I and II, and for the mining industry.

The 1,800-acre plant was reportedly the world's largest supplier of dynamite during World War I, and demand for the product was high into the 1950s. Most of the site was used for the production of explosives. The southern part of the property was used to store products prior to shipment.